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**Review of: A Companion to Michael Oakeshott – By Paul Franco and Leslie  
Marsh (eds.)**

Beckstein, Martin

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**A Companion to Michael Oakeshott** by **Paul Franco** and **Leslie Marsh** (eds). Pennsylvania, PA: Penn State Press. 2012. 346pp., £52.95, ISBN 978 0 271 05407 0

The publication of *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott* by Penn State Press is proof of the increasing recognition of Oakeshott's philosophical work in recent years. The fact that another companion has been issued simultaneously by Cambridge University Press (*The Cambridge Companion to Oakeshott*, ed. Efraim Podoksik) underscores the British thinker's importance to the intellectual world. Yet were these two products to be taken as mere rivals, rather than complementary pieces of scholarship, Paul Franco and Leslie Marsh's volume wouldn't need to fear the comparison.

In their volume, Franco and Marsh assemble fifteen articles by leading experts in the field to cast a kaleidoscopic view on the "life and letters" of Michael Oakeshott. Perhaps one should more precisely say that the companion wishes to inform about Oakeshott's multifarious philosophical achievements as well as his eccentric (and much less meritorious) *love* life, or so the focus of the unlikely biographical note at the beginning of the book (by Robert Grant) suggests. The articles that follow the introduction by the editors and the biographical note are organized in two parts. The first part deals with Oakeshott's reflections on the practice of philosophy, morality, historical knowledge, as well as religious and aesthetic kinds of experience. The second part discusses his work on political philosophy and the history of political thought. Thus, the wide range of Oakeshott's oeuvre is covered and, what is more, the quality of contributions is generally high.

Inevitably, not all interests can be wholly accommodated when assembling a collection on a prolific philosopher. For instance, readers will not find a succinct conspectus of Oakeshott's political philosophy and the limits of his ideas, or its reception in the academic world. Also, Oakeshott's stance on economic policy is not addressed in great depth. (Leslie Marsh's outstanding article on Oakeshott and F.A. Hayek primarily inquires into issues of cognitive science and the philosophy of mind.) Finally, though this is probably a virtue rather than a vice, the editors refrain from attempting to reconcile the partly diverging interpretations of the individual authors (p. 12). However, there is no doubt that the articles manage to acquaint the reader with Oakeshott's philosophical achievements without being uncritical, and take the existing literature in several respects one step further. *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott* can therefore legitimately claim to serve as an authoritative guide to Oakeshott's thought. It will be of great value to advanced scholars as well as students unfamiliar with his ideas.

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